

IN THE CLAIMS

The text of all claims under examination is submitted, and the status of each is identified. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (original): A method of producing an amide from the corresponding nitrile comprising the following steps,

- i) providing a microorganism capable of producing a nitrile hydratase biocatalyst,
- ii) culturing the microorganism in a growth medium ,
- iii) storing the microorganism,
- iv) contacting the nitrile with the microorganism in an aqueous medium and thereby converting the nitrile to the amide,

wherein the microorganism is stored as none actively growing free cells in a storage medium that comprises water.

2. (original): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is recovered from the growth medium in the form of an aqueous paste comprising whole microbial cells.

3. (original): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is recovered from the growth medium and is stored as an aqueous suspension of microbial cells in a suspending medium selected from the group consisting of water, physiological saline solution, a physiological buffer solution and an aqueous liquid containing at least one component of the growth medium.

4. (original): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is retained in the growth medium.

5. (currently amended): A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 4~~ in which the amide is an ethylenically unsaturated amide, preferably acrylamide or methacrylamide.

6. (currently amended): A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 5~~ in which the components of the growth medium comprised in the storage medium includes urea or a urea derivative.

7. (currently amended): A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 6~~ in which the microorganism is stored at a temperature above the freezing point of the storage medium, ~~preferably above 0°C,~~
~~more preferably between 4 and 30°C.~~

8. (currently amended); A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 7~~ in which the microorganism is stored for a period of at least 2 days, ~~preferably between 3 and 28 days.~~

9. (currently amended): A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 8~~ in which the microorganism is of the Rhodococcus genus, ~~preferably of the Rhodococcus rhodochrous species.~~

10. (currently amended): A method according to ~~any of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 9~~ in which the microorganism is Rhodococcus rhodochrous NCIMB 41164.

11. (new): A method according to claim 9 in which the microorganism is of the Rhodococcus rhodochrous species.